



General Certificate of Education

History 1041

Specification

Unit HIS1N

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

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Unit HIS1N

Unit 1N: Totalitarian Ideology in Theory and Practice, c1848–c1941

Comments from the Chief Examiner: Unit 1

In this examination session some issues generic to all the Unit 1 papers were noted:

- Candidates are required to answer two questions from a choice of three, each consisting of a part (a) and a part (b), i.e. 4 sub-questions in total. Whether due to timing issues or to a misunderstanding of the rubric, a few candidates either answered all six sub-questions or answered only one question. The format of Unit 1 papers is significantly different from AQA's legacy units, so it is vital that all candidates are aware in advance of what they will be required to do.
- Timing issues caused other problems too. This is a one hour 15 minute paper, thus allowing roughly 12 minutes in which to complete the (a) questions and 25 minutes for the (b) questions. A number of candidates failed to complete the paper and in addition to those who attempted only one question, there were others who missed out a part-question or lapsed into notes. Selecting relevant material and maintaining a strong focus on the question is part of the skill being tested in this examination and candidates need to realise that they will penalise themselves heavily if they fail to tackle the two questions required, in full. Furthermore, since they are asked to write in continuous prose – which is the only way any sense of argument can be conveyed – notes will never score highly.
- It was clear from some scripts that candidates had not studied, or revised, the full specification content for their chosen alternative. It must be emphasised that the three questions may be drawn from any part of that content. Without a secure understanding of the complete content, candidates will find it extremely difficult to perform well.

Report from the Principal Examiner

General Comments

There were 107 entries for the unit. Candidates had a free choice of two out of the three questions set. Question 1 on the USSR was answered by 67 of the candidates, with 54 of the candidature answering question 2 on Fascist Italy. Question 3 on Nazi Germany was answered by 93 of the candidates. Clearly candidates answered two of the three questions in all combinations, though the USSR/Nazi Germany was the most popular combination and the USSR/Fascist Italy was marginally the least popular. There were awards at all levels of response for each of the six sub-questions, though collectively across both sub-questions Question 1 was answered most effectively by the entry as a whole, followed by Question 2; Question 3 was the least effectively answered. This pattern was followed when considering the sub-questions; Question 1(a) was answered better than question 2(a), which in turn was answered better than questions (a), and the same applied to Questions 1(b), 2(b) and 3(b). There was an impression that some candidates may not have completely finished the specification on Nazi Germany, though it was also the case that answers to Question 3(b) lacked careful focus.

Question (a) asks candidates to explain an event or issue, and responses need to cover a range of reasons 'why'. Three reasons, supported by evidence, will secure an award of Level 3 (7–9 marks). To achieve Level 4 (10–12 marks), candidates must offer links between the factors, for example, prioritising with an explanation, or appreciation of the inter-relationship of the factors. Candidates are not expected to evaluate the validity of the question, for example there was no credit in Question 2(a) for arguing that many Italians did not believe democracy had failed Italy.

Question (b) requires an extended response. Answers with some understanding of the question but a lack of evidence, or narrative which demonstrates an implicit understanding of the question will only gain marks within the lower two levels (Level 1, 1–6 and Level 2, 7–11 marks). Answers with focus and evidence will reach Level 3 (12–16 marks), though they may not consider alternative factors and therefore lack balance. At Level 4 (17–21 marks) answers will have balance and depth of evidence. Level 5 (22–24) answers will also demonstrate judgment.

Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of ideology in the different contexts, but centres are reminded that the ideological context of this paper is one of its distinctive features and teaching should reflect this focus.

It is also worth making clear what is meant by the requirement for candidates to demonstrate understanding of different historical interpretations. Candidates demonstrate this skill by showing understanding of alternative explanations or challenging the explanation suggested in the question, in other words, by arguing in Question 1(b) that fear of Trotsky was actually of very little significance after 1926, or in Question 2(b) by arguing that in many ways Fascist Italy tolerated diversity. Describing different historian's viewpoints is a low level skill, as is citing a historian, rather than their evidence. An apposite quote from a historian as the final part of an argument which has already been supported by evidence is an appropriate conclusion to an answer, but is not essential to demonstrate understanding at the highest levels.

Question 1

- (a) This sub-question was answered the most effectively of the six questions on the paper. Almost all were aware of the Political Testament and discussed Lenin's concerns about the other Bolshevik's; less focused answers described the contents, but better answers linked understanding of the contents of the Testament to Lenin's concerns that the party would be split. The best answers demonstrated conceptual understanding, relating collective leadership to Marxist-Leninism and the desire for a dictatorship of the proletariat, even if this was to be exercised through the vanguard of the party, rather than any form of personal leadership.
- (b) Candidates interpreted 'fear of Trotsky' in two distinct ways, either of which was permissible. Some considered the general fear of Trotsky as the Red Napoleon and on his idea of permanent (worldwide) revolution. Others focused on Stalin's personal distinct fear of Trotsky. The key to either approach was how it was linked to the issues of explaining Stalin's victory. Good answers made reference to the fear of Trotsky being critical in Zinoviev and Kamenev's complicity with Stalin in suppressing Lenin's Testament, or to the lack of support in 1924 for permanent revolution. Weaker answers asserted that Stalin was scared of Trotsky and therefore 'got rid of him', with a significant minority of candidates believing Stalin terrorised and violently removed his opposition, erroneously including material on the 1930s, as well as gratuitous references to Mexico and ice-picks. Gratifyingly there were few narratives of the power struggle. At Level 4 and Level 5 answers balanced fear of Trotsky with other factors, covering Stalin's luck, his power and influence as General Secretary and in particular the Lenin Legacy. These

answers also demonstrated an understanding of the ideological context of the power struggle, though understandably for this question there was more focus on the future of the revolution than on the development of the economy.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates got to the top of Level 2 or above by offering a range of reasons for the failure of democracy post-war. The development of the reasons and the linkage between them determined how far into Level 3 or Level 4 the answer went. The 'mutilated victory' was particularly well understood, though most candidates laboured under the misapprehension that the Treaty of Versailles denied Italy the territory promised at the Treaty of London. Answers with an appreciation of the economic and social context generally were placed in Level 2, but answers that related this to the failure of the governments to deal with these problems demonstrated good understanding for Level 3 and above. Some answers argued that democracy had failed because Mussolini came to power, which could gain credit, but too often this then led to a description of the March on Rome, which left the answer in the lower levels.
- (b) The question required evaluation of the Fascist state's ability to remove diversity. Some candidates became over-focused on the reasons for intolerance, which was then followed by assertion to the effect that this was achieved because Mussolini desired totalitarian control. The best answers showed an understanding of the measures introduced to crush diversity, including the Acerbo Laws, murder of Matteotti, the Legge Fascistissime and control of the party, balanced with limited success given the status and power of the monarchy and the need to compromise with the Catholic Church. Candidates were aware of the importance of racial policy, but there was limited precision in relation to the position of Black Africans within the Italian Empire, with Libya and Abyssinia being confused. Understanding of anti-Semitic policy was also confused in some cases, though the best answers were aware of the changes from 1938.

Question 3

- (a) The question required clear conceptual understanding of Nazism, which is the first bullet point in the Nazi section in the specification. Good answers covered differing views of race, social and economic equality and theories of leadership. References to financial support for anti-Communism from business were accepted, but general comments that Nazis hated communism and therefore ideology was anti-communist lacked a real understanding of the ideological basis of Nazism and were rewarded only at a low level.
- (b) The question was the least effectively answered part of the paper. There was some understanding of the Reichstag Fire and how the response was manipulated by the Nazis, though references to the Enabling Act were sporadic. There was also some general reference to the fears of business, and better responses linked this to the role of the SA in physically challenging the KPD, though there were few examples of businessmen (like Kierdorf) that provided financial backing for the Nazi Party. A significant minority of responses argued that 'the church' supported the Nazis because they offered protection from atheistic communism, showing a lack of understanding of the differences between German Protestants and German Catholics. Some answers offered balance and understanding of differing interpretations by considering further factors responsible for the rise to power, but too often these responses were generalised and offered little precise understanding. The economic problems were unsurprisingly most frequently considered, but all but a handful of candidates believed that hyper-inflation brought Hitler to power.

The general impression was that candidates had an impressionistic understanding of why Hitler came to power, but limited detailed knowledge.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.